

PROJECT ABSTRACT

The state of Georgia is applying for funds (\$3,476,312) to support the critical work of the Georgia State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (Council). The Council, building on the state's existing, significant early childhood efforts, will focus on developing a plan for a comprehensive system of early childhood education and care to serve Georgia's children and families in a more coordinated, efficient manner. The Council's plan will focus on improving program quality, empowering parents, and unifying data. It will also undertake projects to articulate a vision for Georgia's early childhood system; design an improved system for training personnel; improve the coordination and quality of monitoring and oversight; connect young children screened for health and mental health issues to services that can help them; inform parents about developmental practices and available programs; and design a coordinated data system to improve service to young children.

The overarching goal of the Council is that all children enter kindergarten ready to learn – a goal best supported by the coordinated efforts of the state, rather than agencies working in isolation. The three primary objectives under this goal are:

1. *Improving program quality.* Children in Georgia spend millions of hours in programs like pre-k, child care, and Head Start. Research clearly supports that the quality of their experience in those hours will affect their later success;
2. *Empowering parents.* Parents are a child's primary educators and caregivers. All Georgia parents must understand the important developmental needs of young children and should know the services the state can provide to help them meet those needs. Parents should also know what quality service means and how to recognize it in a care provider; and

3. *Unifying and coordinating data.* A unified early childhood data system will support parents, educators, policymakers, and researchers by helping them obtain information and data – and answer key questions – about the progress of and services for young children in Georgia. Key questions include what services children are currently accessing; what needs they have that could be met by other existing programs; and how children who received services fare in the K-12 system.

PROJECT NARRATIVE

I. The Need for Assistance and Objectives

A. The Need

Georgia's population is younger, lower-income, and more mobile than the population of most states. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the state has an overall population approaching 10 million, making it one of the largest states in the nation. Significantly, 7.65% of its population is under the age of five, the fifth-highest percentage among the 50 states (and the highest of any state east of the Mississippi River).

Poverty is a real challenge for Georgia's children. Twenty-six percent of Georgia's young children live below the poverty line, a higher percentage than for the nation as a whole (24%). Financial issues in Georgia are urban, suburban, and rural; indeed, in all three areas the percentage of children who are low income is higher than the national average. In urban areas, 58% of Georgia's young children are low income (compared to 52% nationally); in suburban areas, 38% (36%), and in rural areas, 67% (53%). Many of these children are children of the

working poor – 55% of Georgia's low income parents have full-time, year-round employment, higher than the 47% national average.¹

In addition, Georgia's mobility rate is high. Georgia ranks 7th among states in sending residents to other states and 4th in receiving residents from other states.² All told, 28% of Georgia's low-income young children have moved recently – well above the national average of 21%.³

The conditions facing Georgia's young children compel us to act to improve the services provided them and their families.

B. The Council's Objectives

The Council's primary objectives for its grant fall into three broad categories: (1) Improving program quality; (2) Empowering parents; and (3) Unifying and coordinating our data. These objectives are deeply interrelated. Improving program quality helps to support parents, and, in turn, empowering parents can help drive the improvement of program quality. Meaningful and useful data is a foundational element of the quality improvement process and is also a critical tool for parents.

- *Improving program quality.* Young children in Georgia spend tens of millions of hours with program providers in pre-k, child care, and Head Start. Extensive research tells us that the quality of their experience during those hours will have a major effect on their later success. In Georgia we know that many of those hours

¹ All data in this paragraph comes from the National Center on Children in Poverty's state data profile on low-income young children, available at <http://www.nccp.org/profiles/>.

² Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends, reports on population movement, available at <http://pewsocialtrends.org/maps/migration/>.

³ National Center on Children in Poverty's state data profile.

are being spent in positive environments with supportive adults, but we also know that too many of those hours are not. Georgia has work to do in: (a) defining what quality is in a manner that ensures good outcomes for children, is widely agreed upon, and is easily understood by parents and providers; (b) ensuring that the provider community has the support necessary to achieve quality as defined by the state; and (c) providing oversight in a consistent and efficient manner, including building on the state's prior efforts to improve inter-rater reliability.

- *Empowering parents.* Parents are a child's primary educators and caregivers. Resources can be provided to all Georgia parents to help them understand the importance of the early years and the developmental needs of young children with information about what services are available for parents to help meet those needs. Parents also can benefit from being informed about what quality service means and how to look for it from a provider. The state can work to improve the coordination of its outreach to parents, which will provide more efficient service through consistent and comprehensive messaging and information.
- *Unifying and coordinating our data.* A unified early childhood data system could support parents, educators, policymakers, and researchers by helping them obtain information and data – and answer key questions – about the progress of and services for young children in Georgia. Key questions include what services children are currently accessing; what needs they have that could be met by other existing programs; and how children who received services fare in the K-12 system. In developing the system, the state's focus should be on how to make

data a useful tool for those working on behalf of young children while respecting parent choice and complying with relevant privacy laws.

Georgia is currently providing some quality programming, empowering some parents, and collecting a great deal of data. But we know that the state's needs in all of these areas are significant. The state's program quality and outreach to parents is inconsistent, and we are deeply concerned that the children and parents requiring the most assistance from the state are often the ones least likely to receive quality service and good information. We have made strides in improving the coherence and consistency of our services, and we intend to use our grant to do more. Moreover, to truly understand the impact of our work, we must connect our various stockpiles of data in ways that make meaningful and useful information readily available.

II. The Availability of Early Childhood Education in Georgia

A. Available Programming

The three primary education and care programs serving Georgia's children are state pre-k, child care, and Head Start; a description of each is provided below.

Another important funding stream for young children is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), only two states serve a lower percentage of three and four year olds through special education preschool than the 3.2% served in Georgia. Better service to children identified for special education is an important element of the Council's work.

Each of these programs plays a major role in school readiness and will be a full partner in the work of the Council. The Council recognizes that these programs will need to work not only with each other but with many other health and human services provided through federal and

state funding. The Council is also committed to appropriately supporting those parents who choose not to enroll their children in government-funded programming or programming outside the home.

1. State Pre-K

Georgia's Pre-K Program is one of the nation's oldest, largest, and best. According to the annual survey by NIEER, only two other states serve a higher percentage of their four year olds in state pre-k. Children are served for 6.5 hours per day, five days a week, and the program is open to all regardless of income. Programs are provided in a mixed delivery system, including the public schools and a range of private providers.⁴ The program serves 81,136 children; 32,401 (39.9%) are white, 30,688 (37.8%) are black, and 10,542 (13%) are Hispanic. More than half of the children (54.9%) are considered economically at risk. Unlike child care and Head Start (discussed below), state pre-k has no restrictions based on income; its demographic statistics are much more reflective of the state's overall population than child care or Head Start, although the population of state pre-k still has higher percentages of black and Hispanic children than the overall population.

Georgia has long been aware of the need to provide infrastructure supporting the local delivery of quality pre-k. The state has done substantial work to develop content standards that all providers must use that are directly correlated to Georgia's kindergarten standards. Georgia also has piloted and is now implementing a statewide Pre-K Child Assessment based on the Work Sampling System, and teachers have been trained in the assessment's use. In addition, the state's efforts to improve inter-rater reliability have led to better and more consistent state oversight. Unique identifiers are assigned to children in state pre-k (both public and private

⁴ *The State of Preschool 2008*, National Institute for Early Education Research, Barnett et al., available online at <http://nieer.org/yearbook/>, at pp. 48-49 (Georgia profile).

settings) that follow the child through the state's longitudinal data system. Georgia's Pre-K Program currently meets nine of the 10 quality benchmarks developed by NIEER; as of July 1, 2010, Georgia will meet all 10 of NIEER's quality benchmarks.

2. Child Care

Child care in Georgia is provided primarily by licensed, center-based caregivers. Of young children enrolled in subsidized child care programs in Georgia, the percentage in center-based care (85%) and licensed care (97%) is substantially higher than the national averages (61% and 76%, respectively).⁵ The population of preschool children in child care also skews young with 35% of birth to two year olds enrolled (compared to a national average of 30%) and 33% of three to five year olds enrolled (compared to a national average of 35%).⁶ The great majority of children in Child Care & Development Fund subsidized child care are from single-parent families – 92.6%, according to September 2009 data from the Department of Human Services. The Department also reported that the vast majority of children in subsidized child care are black (78.9%).

While a high percentage of Georgia's subsidized child care is in centers and offered by licensed providers, historically Georgia's requirements for licensed care have been among the nation's least restrictive. The staffing ratios and maximum group sizes allowed in Georgia have been among the most permissive in the 50 states, and Georgia has also been behind other states in its pre-service requirements for providers.⁷ Recently the state has undertaken administrative changes to its child care quality requirements with the goal of providing a better experience and quality for the children enrolled.

⁵ *Child Care Participation State Profile*, Georgia state profile, Center for Law and Social Policy, available online at http://www.clasp.org/in_the_states?id=0010.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *The State of Preschool 2008f*, at pp. 246-247.

3. *Head Start*

Head Start is a federal-to-local program with a long history of serving children in the greatest need and providing comprehensive services beyond classroom education. Since 1965, it has provided comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families; in its 45 years it has served nearly 25 million children nationwide. Studies have shown that Head Start has a positive impact on children in both the short and the long term with benefits cutting across more than one developmental domain.

The profile of Head Start enrollees in Georgia is rather unusual in that Georgia is one of only a handful of states to serve a higher percentage of its three-year-old cohort than of its four-year-old cohort.⁸ The percentage of three year olds served is slightly above the national average, but the percentage of four year olds served has been low by national standards.⁹ The success of the state's preschool program for four year olds and its successful partnering with Head Start through a collaborative delivery model is a major factor in that percentage as it affects the provision of services needed to accommodate four year olds through Head Start.

Recent national data shows that Head Start in Georgia serves a population that is disproportionately black compared to other states. In Georgia 69% of Head Start enrollees are black, compared to 29% nationally.¹⁰ On the flip side 21% of Georgia's Head Start children are white (compared to 39% nationally), and 19% are Hispanic (36%).¹¹ The percentage of children

⁸ *The State of Preschool 2008*. Georgia's profile is on pages 48-49, and comparative data was derived from a review of profiles for the nation as a whole and other states. The NIEER data shows 9% of Georgia three year olds enrolled in Head Start and 7% of four year olds; in fact, more recent data from Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning shows that the percentage of three year olds enrolled has jumped to 9.8%, and the percentage of four year olds has increased to 8%.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Head Start by the Numbers*, Georgia state profile, Center for Law and Social Policy, available online at http://www.clasp.org/in_the_states?id=0010, at p.2. The percentages do not add up to 100% because in the data collected children considered Hispanic can also be counted as white or black.

¹¹ *Id.*

in Georgia Head Start who are primarily Spanish speakers is also much lower than the national percentage – 12% to 26%.¹² Georgia for many years has had one of the nation's highest percentages of black residents, and while in the 1990s Georgia had one of the nation's fastest-growing Hispanic populations, the state as a whole still has a lower-than-average percentage of Hispanic residents.¹³

Finally, the percentage of Head Start enrollees in Georgia from a single-parent family (74%) is markedly higher than the national percentage (57%).¹⁴

B. Status of Current Collaboration and Governance

Georgia's State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care is new, created by executive order of Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue on September 30, 2009. However, the Council builds on a tradition of collaboration in Georgia's government and on a recognition that agencies and programs must work together to improve outcomes for children.

Georgia is one of only a few states to have a stand-alone agency with authority over early childhood programs. In 2004, Governor Perdue and the Georgia General Assembly created Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning to serve the needs of children aged birth through five and their families. Its services include state pre-k, child care for young children, federal nutrition programs (the Child and Adult Care Food Program [CACFP] and the Summer Food Service Program [SFSP]), and Georgia Head Start Collaboration Office (Head Start itself is administered by the federal Department of Health and Human Services). Bright from the Start is the lead agency in Georgia's State Advisory Council funding application.

¹² *Id.* at p. 1.

¹³ United States Census data, www.census.gov.

¹⁴ *Head Start by the Numbers*, Georgia state profile, n. 6 above, at p. 2.

In addition to focusing on the special needs of young children, Georgia has recognized that education is a lifelong process beginning at birth and continuing through higher education. Governor Perdue created an Alliance of Education Agency Heads, which addresses the educational needs of students throughout their careers. The Alliance is chaired by Kathy Cox, Georgia's elected State Superintendent of Schools; it also includes Dr. Holly Robinson, Commissioner of Bright from the Start, and the five other education agency heads in Georgia.

Georgia has also recognized that to serve children properly requires an effort beyond traditional education agencies, and the First Lady's Children's Cabinet has brought together representatives from education, health, human services, and juvenile justice agencies to work together on behalf of Georgia's children. First Lady Mary Perdue has made children her primary policy focus for the last seven years. Governor Perdue's executive order creating the Council requires that its work be aligned with that of the First Lady's Children's Cabinet, and several members of the cabinet are active participants in the Council. The Council members who also serve on the First Lady's Children's Cabinet are Superintendent Cox; Commissioner Robinson; B.J. Walker, Commissioner, Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS); Dr. Frank Shelp, Commissioner, Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Studies; Jen Bennecke, Executive Director, Governor's Office for Children and Families; and Dr. Carla Denise Edwards, Interim Commissioner, Department of Community Health.

DHS and Commissioner B.J. Walker have also played a leadership role in serving young children. The agency supports a wide range of services for families and children, including child care. The participation of DHS in the Council's work will help solidify the Council as a forum for collaboration among education and human services agencies and providers.

The Council's work will build on the progress already made in Georgia. One new dimension that the Council will bring is more formal collaboration between state government and its outside partners. Parents are the most important force in the life of a young child, and while state government can play a valuable role in supporting parents and children, it cannot and should not do that alone. The Council brings together a diverse group of leaders from multiple professional fields and from all across the state, united by a common passion: improving outcomes for young children in Georgia.

C. Status of State Early Learning Standards and Professional Development

Governor Perdue is a national leader in the effort to develop common and internationally benchmarked state K-12 learning standards, a key element of the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top initiative. His national leadership builds on the work already undertaken in Georgia – led by Superintendent of Schools Kathy Cox and the State Board of Education – to improve the rigor of K-12 standards and develop new curriculum. To improve student outcomes, it is essential that learning standards provide a smooth continuum anchored by age-appropriate standards for young children at one end and college- and career-readiness at the other. The goal for Georgia should be to have the following progression of research-based standards:

- Age-appropriate learning standards for our youngest children, ages birth through five, that ensure their readiness for kindergarten.
- Reading standards articulated from birth through third grade.
- Early elementary standards that build on the early learning standards while preparing children for the rigorous work ahead in middle and high school.

- High school standards anchored to college and career readiness with an aligned progression of standards in middle school that prepare students for a rigorous high school experience. Work underway in the Common Core State Standards initiative will identify a model for state college- and career-ready standards. Georgia has signed onto the common core initiative.

Georgia's commitment to standards-based reform has already been extended to early learning. Georgia has initiated work to articulate learning standards from birth through age five defining age-appropriate standards for children before pre-k and kindergarten entry. The review includes Georgia Early Learning Standards, Georgia's Pre-K Content Standards, Head Start Child Outcomes, and Georgia Performance Standards for kindergarten through third grade; the project will also study alignment between the pre-k content standards and the work sampling assessments used in Georgia's Pre-K Program. The purpose is to ensure deep alignment that starts with birth-to-five programs and continues through the early elementary grades based on developmentally-appropriate practices for young children and the revised early elementary standards based on the common core. These efforts will help establish Georgia as a national leader in providing a seamless progression of learning standards for children throughout their academic careers.

Georgia has already done major work to create appropriate, research-based learning standards for early learning. At this time, however, Georgia – like most states – is committed to adopting the Common Core State Standards. The early learning standards must be high-quality and age appropriate, but because it is important that they be articulated to the K-12 standards, any revisions to the K-12 standards will naturally trigger some review at the early learning level.

Professional development has been a significant area of focus for Georgia. Georgia has expended significant resources developing a Professional Development System, including a teacher registry for early childhood care and education professionals and a trainer/training approval system. Ultimately, the system will be a tool for teachers to identify the professional development that suits their needs and for the state to help ensure program quality. The trainer approval system ensures that trainers are competent to provide instruction and assigns trainers to levels based on their credentials. Professional development is approved if the trainer is qualified and the professional development satisfies the needs of the provider. In addition, Georgia has identified "career levels" that can help inform teacher professional development choices.

While it is essential to plan for the early childhood workforce of the future, the state's professional development offerings must recognize and support the many talented and hard working early childhood personnel currently in place. Georgia has already made strides to improve professional development, including implementing the Scholarships program, the Incentives program, and the FIRST (First-time Incentive to Raise Standards for Teachers) program, all of which support and reward early childhood personnel for enhancing their credentials. The state should, however, continue to evaluate how professional development should look for multiple programs, potentially using that opportunity to push for greater consistency across programs.

III. The Council's Action Agenda: Strategies for Increasing the Number of Children Ready for Kindergarten

Georgia's action agenda recognizes that improving outcomes for children will demand a collaborative approach and a commitment of time and energy. The implementation of this agenda may be decelerated by Georgia's current fiscal crisis, and the sustainability of the

Council's efforts may also be affected by the state's economic situation. On the other hand, the implementation of this agenda may be accelerated if the federal government provides additional financial support focusing on early childhood education and care, or if the state's budget situation improves more rapidly than anticipated.

The Council's overarching goal for the grant is that all children enter kindergarten ready to learn. The primary objectives under this goal are: (1) Improving program quality; (2) Empowering parents; and (3) Unifying and coordinating our data. All of the plans identified in this application are meant to increase the number of children who enter kindergarten ready to learn. However, given the need for improved data and Georgia's commitment to a needs assessment process, the Council expects that better defined goals for improving kindergarten readiness will be a product of its work yet to come.

A. Improving Program Quality

1. *The Needs Assessment*

Our needs assessment will begin by articulating a vision of a coordinated system, with actionable recommendations for better policies in a range of areas that affect children from birth through school entry. The birth to five system will be the first stage of a seamless progression for children from birth through elementary school with the full range of early learning programs aligned with K-12. Developing a meaningful vision will require the Council's high-level leadership and the engagement of a range of key stakeholders. Our vision will focus on the needs of young children and families; we will look at the population of young children in Georgia and will make recommendations for how their needs can best be met. The vision will begin and end with the importance of parents, but it must also include a discussion of the appropriate role of

government and what the government's programs will look like when the Council's vision is realized.

One of the first important actions in the needs assessment process will be to provide a strong definition of program quality. This definition should be developed in consultation with key stakeholders but must be designed to lead positive outcomes for children (including school readiness and reading at grade level by third grade). The definition will help to operationalize the key concepts of program quality. One suggested definition (based on work by the Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University) is as follows:

Quality is the convergence of factors in a child's environment and/or experiences that promote the child's optimal physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. In an out-of-home program setting, this requires:

- Highly skilled staff
- Small class sizes; high adult to child ratios
- Language rich environment
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum
- Safe physical setting
- Warm, responsive interactions between children and staff
- Sensitivity to a child's individual needs
- High levels of child participation

Building on this key initial step of defining quality, the Council can design systems to ensure that providers understand the definition of quality and can develop a plan for ensuring that government-funded providers ultimately have the support needed to reach the agreed-upon threshold. The Council's definition of quality should also guide its parental outreach efforts to

inform parents about what quality programming is and how they can look for it. Ultimately the Council will recommend a "quality continuum" that gives parents and providers meaningful and useful information about program offerings.

The Council's vision will focus on early education and care but will also address how best to support parents in fulfilling the health, nutrition, and care needs of the youngest Georgians. The responsibility of parents to their children will be of primary importance to the Council, and discussions of government programs will be in the context of how to support parents in fulfilling their responsibilities. Among government programs, Head Start provides a range of support services, and the partnership between Head Start and pre-k has helped to expand the scope of service provision, but more could be done to make comprehensive services portable – so they follow the child who needs them across programs. We also know that many of our youngest children would benefit from high-quality comprehensive services that are currently unavailable, particularly given research showing that the most significant brain development occurs in the first 18 months of life. So while our vision will incorporate all of the Council's objectives, we will have a special focus on improving the quality of the services available to Georgia parents for their young children.

Once our vision has been articulated, we can assess Georgia's need by comparing the vision to the current reality. Georgia has already established itself as a leader in self-evaluating its current reality, including the forthcoming release of a study by the Frank Porter Graham Center at the University of North Carolina regarding the quality of Georgia's child care. Our needs assessment will include a thorough review of where we currently stand based in large part on research that has already been completed. We know that we have some real strengths, including Georgia's Pre-K Program, and that many children receive quality education and care –

but we also know that we have farther to go, and our needs assessment will honestly inform where we have work to do.

After we establish the vision and the current reality, we will articulate a roadmap for getting from where we are to where we want to go. We will build off of our progress and the lessons we have learned, including our successes and challenges in implementing pre-k statewide. The comprehensive plan will identify the resource levels needed to achieve the stated goals, recognizing that the current fiscal climate does not allow for the immediate infusion of additional resources. Because of that, the plan will address the utilization of existing resources, and may suggest repurposing funds where they can more effectively serve the state's goals. Our discussion of resources will also identify the proper role for parents, as well as federal, state, and local governments. Our plan will identify federal and state barriers that must be overcome to achieve the long term vision, and will suggest legal and regulatory changes necessary for the plan to be implemented.

The comprehensive plan is meant to provide a long-term vision for Georgia, but we know that for the long term vision to be realized, a lot of work needs to happen immediately. For the Council's recommendations to have an impact on the lives of young children, they need to be translated into policy change; where we identify policies that are not consistent with our vision for young children, we will recommend changing the policies to improve child outcomes.

The needs assessment should complement – and build off of – other state policy initiatives, including the recently-filed Race to the Top application. (Georgia has been named a finalist in the Race to the Top competition.) The process will include the following steps:

- The Council should lead a statewide conversation about the needs of young children and their families. As part of that conversation, the Council should

identify which needs are appropriately served by government-funded programs.

This discussion will involve public meetings in different parts of the state with invitations sent to a wide range of constituents to participate.

- To ensure that the conversation builds on existing efforts to obtain feedback from parents and families, Council staff will coordinate with existing parent advisory councils for agencies and programs. Council staff will develop an inventory of existing parent advisory council activities to help inform Council members and will invite parent advisory groups to participate in the Council's process. The Council will also coordinate with the Georgia Council on Aging and the National Center on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren to ensure that grandparents and seniors have the opportunity to participate in the Council's work.
- Based on its expertise and the feedback received from the public, the Council should outline a vision for providing service to young children in Georgia. The plan will be aspirational and long-term (five to 10 years) with the idea that, while resources may not be currently available to implement major elements of the plan, having the plan will allow the state to make better decisions about its current use of resources.
- On a parallel track to the conversations contemplated in the preceding bulleted paragraphs, the state will establish baselines of which children are participating in which programs and the quality of those programs.
- With the vision and baseline data in hand, the Council will develop a roadmap for getting from where the state is to where it plans to be. That roadmap will include

recommendations for yearly benchmarks to ensure the state is progressing toward its vision.

- Based on the agreed-upon definition of quality, the Council will make recommendations for developing and maintaining a Georgia quality continuum; for providing supports to providers to reach the expected level of quality; and for providing public information about the state's quality improvement efforts. The Council will specifically discuss the level of resources needed to implement the definition of quality given the state's goals for child access to existing programs.
- The Council will identify any barriers in federal or state law to the implementation of its vision.
- The Council will also design a process for continually updating the comprehensive plan and needs assessment in future years.

The Council's role will be to drive high-level policy conversation. The comprehensive plan and needs assessment will not ultimately be a series of program-centered wish lists but will instead be a parent- and child-focused document. Federal grant funding will be used to support the process of holding public hearings around the state, preparing a report, and ensuring that the report is disseminated. The budget of \$125,000 for the needs assessment will help to support the following:

- Planning and organizing the needs assessment;
- Determining the needs assessment methodology;
- Collecting needs assessment data; and
- Summarizing and disseminating needs assessment results and developing a strategic action plan.

The Council will ultimately present a long-term vision for providing service to young children in Georgia.

- The conversation will build on existing efforts to obtain feedback from parents and families, including parent advisory groups and grandparent-focused groups.
- Staff will work to establish baselines of which children are participating in which programs, and the quality of those programs. The final report will include a roadmap for getting from where the state is to where it needs to be.

The report will include recommendations for a quality continuum and will identify barriers in state or federal law.

2. Key Elements of Program Quality

Not all children are enrolled in programs outside the home – but for those who are, the quality of their experiences in those programs plays a significant role in determining whether they enter school ready. A successful quality early childhood program is composed of many key elements, and in recent years Georgia has focused increasingly on these key elements. The following elements meet two important criteria for inclusion in our federal grant application: one, they make a major contribution to school readiness on a system-wide basis; and two, they are areas where the Council's expertise and focus can make the most difference with regard to improving policy and child outcomes. The application describes three projects the Council will undertake to improve program quality, and then other key policy areas where quality improvement projects are already underway.

a. Council Grant-Funded Projects to Improve Quality

i. Staff Qualifications and Higher Education Capacity

Georgia recognizes that the most important determinant in the experience of young children is the engagement of adults around them. When those adults are employees in government-funded programs, the government has an obligation to help ensure that those adults are qualified and trained to perform their jobs properly. This requires state agencies to partner with higher education institutions and providers – among others – to ensure that educators and caregivers are in a position to succeed.

The state has already taken numerous steps to change regulations in ways that lead to improved personnel quality. The state's efforts to date have focused on raising the qualifications floor. On an ongoing basis, Georgia needs to consider the appropriate minimum requirements for personnel in programs for young children, and the Council should remain abreast of the implementation of new rules with an eye toward the evolution of those rules. The Council can also play a cross-agency role in helping to bring consistency to the requirements for providers in multiple programs.

The Council will also go beyond discussions of minimum quality. With state agencies, private providers, and higher education at the same table, the conversation should move beyond "floor" and into how Georgia can create a market where quality personnel are properly valued. In the future, providers should have a much easier time identifying and hiring quality personnel, and higher education should be training those quality personnel. But providers alone cannot build this system, nor should higher education be expected to mobilize in support of a market that does not yet exist. Only through working together can systemic personnel change be brought about.

The Council will identify the staff qualifications needed to successfully execute the comprehensive plan. The Council's work will seek to bring coherence to the staff qualifications in multiple programs while recognizing that different programs play different roles and at this

time will appropriately have some differences in provider qualifications. Once the Council has identified the qualifications of the Georgia early childhood workforce needed to implement its vision, it will use the existing, updated professional development registry (see Section II.C above) to determine how much of the vision has been realized. The baseline information in the registry can be used to develop a gap analysis. Based on the gap analysis, the Council will work with its provider partners to understand what market conditions are needed to bring the right personnel into the early childhood field.

The Council will, on a parallel track, measure the higher education pipeline producing qualified personnel for the field. Assuming a gap between the end-goal needs of the field and the current capacity of higher education, the Council will work with its higher education partners and others to plan for an increase in higher education capacity.

As with the needs assessment, the Council's role will be to drive high-level conversation. We expect that, from a process standpoint, the issue of staff qualifications will be largely included in the overall needs assessment discussion, because quality personnel are so central to any goals the Council might wish to achieve in the comprehensive plan. This will be a high-priority area within the planning process. The Council is allocating \$100,000 to support the strategic planning process in this area. While initial discussions can begin while the needs assessment is going on, we expect this work to be incubated within the larger needs assessment discussion, and then emerge in later stages of the grant after the state's overall needs have been better defined.

ii. Program Oversight and Monitoring

Each state agency works to ensure that local programs serving young children are properly fulfilling their responsibilities. Done correctly, monitoring can be a valuable way for the

state and local programs to communicate how best to serve children and is the process by which the state tracks the impact of its investment in a range of programs. Done incorrectly, monitoring is a series of disconnected visits from state inspectors that take on a punitive tone and can leave providers in a tangle of overlapping and inconsistent mandates. In a time of limited resources, the state must ensure not only that programs use state funds effectively but that the state connects with those programs in a way that uses everyone's time efficiently and that communicates effectively about serving children.¹⁵

In Georgia, the current scope of monitoring is often limited and does not adequately support some of the service providers that might need the most assistance. In some instances the state has difficulty finding and retaining qualified personnel to perform monitoring. In other instances quality personnel are available, but the state simply has no resources to hire personnel and provide oversight.

Georgia has begun improving its oversight and monitoring. In a state as large as Georgia, one significant issue is inter-rater reliability, and the state has done extensive work to ensure reliability in its pre-k program; that work is already underway in child care and other programs. In addition the state has redone the mapping of child care services and completed a revised child care resource and referral system based on performance measures. These measures help ensure that program offerings are part of a system, not just a series of unconnected services.

Improving monitoring is not simply a matter of hiring more personnel and sending them to observe programs. Improved monitoring will start with improved data analysis to identify programs with issues that need to be addressed. Then the state – in a manner coordinated across agencies and funding streams – should identify those programs with the greatest need, and

¹⁵ Head Start is monitored directly by the federal government, although providers who offer Head Start may be subject to state-level monitoring if they also offer state-funded programs.

mobilize monitoring by trained personnel who address the specific issues identified. That way, monitoring personnel will utilize their time more effectively, and the time spent with individual programs will have a greater impact on child outcomes. For that reason local programs should be involved in the design of new monitoring protocols to ensure that the process is not an adversarial compliance exercise but is a tool for driving needed improvement. Bright from the Start and the Department of Human Services are currently involved in a project funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to provide specialized, intensive technical assistance to subsidized child care entities not in compliance with basic child care rules and regulations.

The state's successful execution of its oversight role will be a critical part of the success of any comprehensive plan. As part of the state's needs assessment, the Council will identify the state's role in ensuring program quality and articulate what resources the state will need to deploy to ensure quality as programs evolve and expand. This will include recommendations for cross-agency partnerships that best leverage state funding and personnel.

Georgia is allocating \$576,562 for this work, part of which will be used for Bright from the Start to hire a consultant to design an improved monitoring and oversight plan. The work will include as much of the following as possible, depending on bids:

<u>Phase I: Analysis</u>	Provide overall assessment of monitoring programs, develop proposal for unified monitoring, and facilitate discussions to establish feasibility
<u>Phase II: Detailed Analysis</u>	Evaluate technology implications, prepare detailed cost/benefit analysis, deliver final proposal with detailed work plan, and facilitate negotiations among key stakeholders
<u>Phase III: Mobilization</u>	Develop implementation plan in coordination with other projects, launch pilot program, evaluate pilot results, and adjust implementation plans based on pilot
<u>Phase IV: Implementation</u>	Mobilize resources for full implementation, monitor and evaluate performance of full implementation, transition to on-going operations

iii. Health Screening and Healthy Development

Health screening for children enrolled in early care and education programs is a widely acknowledged best practice. State pre-k and Head Start offer screening, but the state should work with local providers and parents to ensure that screening is offered in the most coordinated and efficient manner. This could include expanding screening for infants and toddlers, who are typically the most in need of developmental screening and the least likely to be enrolled in programs that offer it.

More importantly, Georgia should develop plans to help parents follow up on the results obtained in health screenings, particularly to improve mental health services for young children. Children identified through screening as requiring mental health services are not necessarily provided with those services, and the state can help provide parents with the information and resources necessary to translate screening results into appropriate mental health care. Additionally, Georgia currently has no data that captures the results of the existing screening to identify what resources are needed. Improved data could lead to better mobilization of resources at the state and local level and could involve a mix of government agencies and private service providers.

Georgia recommends allocating \$574,750 for activities that include:

- Hiring a Statewide Manager for Early Childhood Mental Health to oversee support efforts; a Mental Health Specialist to provide technical assistance; and several part time local advocates to help parents navigate mental health resources at the local level.

- Training early childhood mental health consultants and child care health consultants on using an evidenced-based best practice model. These consultants will then provide mental health consultation to entities serving children age birth to five.
- Conducting early childhood mental health resource mapping, and supporting existing efforts to include focus on early childhood mental health resources in Georgia.
- Expanding the Georgia crisis line to include early childhood mental health. Hiring contractor to develop protocols and training for handling early childhood mental health situations. Hiring a contractor to enhance existing technology network to handle increased call demand and documentation. Both contractors will provide ongoing technical assistance/technical support for early childhood mental health and technology.

b. Other Related Work to Improve Quality

i. Standards and Professional Development

Georgia's work on standards and professional development is described more fully in Section II.E above. Georgia is currently spending \$1,378,000 on professional development. Building on the work described in II.E, the Council – through the needs assessment and other avenues – will consider ways to improve Georgia's standards and professional development and to fit those efforts into larger quality improvement plans.

ii. Curriculum

While Georgia's standards represent a baseline expectation for what students are expected to know and do, quality curriculum is what really drives classroom instruction. Curriculum

should be aligned to the standards and should help teachers guide their students in developmentally appropriate ways. Early learners develop in multiple domains and at different paces, and ideally, teachers will be able to provide instruction that reaches children where they are and helps them to grow to the best of their ability. Programs in Georgia should have access to good choices of research-based curricula that allow teachers to educate young children in developmentally appropriate ways.

iii. Assessment

Georgia uses a work sampling assessment in Georgia's Pre-K Program, and Head Start also uses research-based assessment tools. State leadership in developing and implementing assessment is critical at this time; early learning assessment is a powerful tool for improving child outcomes but only if it is implemented properly and if the results are used for appropriate purposes. The rollout of assessment in the state pre-k program has been successful, but the state could now consider how to use research-based assessments in a wider range of settings.

Additionally, work is underway to correlate work sampling with Georgia's GKIDS (Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills) kindergarten assessment. Children and educators will benefit from state assessments that are an integrated part of a coherent assessment plan, and in the coming years Georgia will have the opportunity to build on its initial efforts in that important work.

With the implementation of the Pre-K Child Assessment underway, major changes in assessment policy are not a priority for the Council at this time. However, under the Council's auspices, the agencies responsible for implementing assessment will convene experts and stakeholders to discuss how assessments could best be implemented and aligned. Georgia is

currently spending \$449,388 to support its early learning assessment program, and the Council will focus on ways to leverage other available funding to support the state's investment.

iv. Coordination and Integration

A theme that runs through many of the elements of a quality early childhood education and care system is that of coordination and integration. Georgia recognizes that agencies must work together to improve their services. Some of our policies and practices might benefit by rethinking them from the perspective of the provider, the local superintendent, or the parent. Our action agenda recognizes the need to provide service in a consistent and seamless manner.

The accepted definition of quality will ensure positive outcomes for children, such as entering school ready to learn and reading at grade level by third grade. While there are numerous elements of quality, those elements are best considered in the context of a comprehensive plan; none of these elements on their own are sufficient to guarantee program quality, and a comprehensive plan can discuss how they interrelate. The Council's commitment is to define quality in a manner that recognizes the many developmental needs of young children and the fact that both cognitive and non-cognitive development are essential to a child's ultimate success in school and beyond.

B. Empowering Parents

Parents are a child's first teacher, and parental primacy and responsibility are important values for the Council. Parents play the most important role in the development of their children, and to improve school readiness statewide will require improving support for parents. Many parents are eager to do everything they can for their children but are unaware of how a child's brain develops and what they can do to encourage their child's well-being. Several state agencies and many local providers have focused on improving parent engagement and family outreach. Programs outside the home can play an important role in supporting child development; for parents who do enroll their children in programs, the most successful programs will be those that help parents improve their ability to become lifelong advocates for their children.

In Georgia, we recognize that parent engagement needs to occur on at least two levels:

- One is informing all parents about resources available to them as they raise their child, resources that include, but are not limited to, government programs. Many parents want to be involved but suffer either from not having enough information about the services they can access or from having so much information they cannot make sense of it. The action agenda should develop plans to ensure that parents have *useful* information to help guide their choices.
- Another is to ensure that in government-funded programs parents work with program providers to ensure that children receive high-quality and consistent support. If parents and providers work as a team focused on the child's development, the child's long-term outcomes improve.

Informing parents about available resources can occur in several dimensions and build on the work of existing Georgia programs. For example, Georgia's Child Care Resource & Referral

Agencies play a key role in connecting parents to the right services for their children, and Georgia's Pre-K Program resource coordinators serve more than 50,000 children. Family services were provided to another 28,000 families through Head Start. Bright from the Start funds a statewide parent referral system through which parents can locate child care programs anywhere in Georgia by calling one number or visiting one website. Also, Bright from the Start's website contains relevant and useful data in an easily accessible format, and is used by parents across the state to view reports from licensing and Pre-K visits to child care centers.

The state should provide some resources developed across agencies that provide simple and complete information to all parents in a relevant and well-organized manner. These resources will ultimately include information about the quality ratings of programs and how parents can choose programs that are high-quality and will support their child's development. In addition, other resources could be targeted by region or community, or to parents of children with particular needs (for example, parents in homes where the primary language is not English). Finally, when the state has improved its ability to use data, it can design targeted outreach to parents based on the specific needs of their children as long as that outreach is sensitive to the role of the parent and is in accordance with all relevant privacy laws.

A critical element of successful parental empowerment is cultural competency. In a diverse state like Georgia, we must be sensitive to the need to reach many different kinds of parents where they are; a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be successful. Many parents will never choose to enroll their children in center-based education or care, but even those parents could benefit from thoughtful information and support provided by the state. Engaging parents who are not connected to programs – and not likely to connect to programs on their own

– will require innovative thinking, and the Council can help to develop specific strategies for appropriate outreach to those parents.

Once children are enrolled in programs, the state can partner with parents on issues relating to child development. Many programs have a parental support component, but those components may not be consistent within programs, let alone across programs. Working collaboratively, the state can design high-quality outreach to parents of young children that will be consistent across programs (and coordinated for parents whose children are in multiple programs). Improved outreach will help parents ensure that their children are in the right programs; help them understand how their children can best benefit from the program or programs they are in; and help them learn how to advocate for their children in future programs and the public schools.

We know that our many efforts have had some success, but from our rich experience in working with parents, we know that there are many parents that we simply have not had the tools or resources to support. Accordingly, our grant request includes funds to help provide parents with better information. Based on the identified strategies, activities to improve the empowerment of parents include the following:

- The Council will request that state agency staff inventory existing parent outreach efforts through multiple programs. With that inventory the Council will set a policy direction for staff to design an improved and aligned system of parent communication across multiple programs.
- The Council will consult with existing parent advisory councils for government agencies and programs to ensure that their ideas are incorporated into the Council's plans for parental outreach.

- The Council will develop a plan to inform all parents of publicly-funded services
Federal grant funds will be used to help create and disseminate these resources.
- The Council will identify particular populations in Georgia that might need
specific kinds of programs or parental outreach and define a small set of priority
populations for targeted resources. Federal funds can then be used to develop the
outreach resources needed to reach those parents.
- The Council will ensure that the data work (described below) recognizes the need
to support parental outreach.
- The Council will coordinate with the Early Education Commission's plans to
build public awareness, so that the efforts can be aligned as part of a larger
strategy.

The Council proposes to use \$500,000 for parental empowerment, which will allow
Bright from the Start to hire a consultant to undertake the following:

- Research focus groups – campaign planning
- Creative – print, online applications
- Print materials – printing/distribution
- Campaign targeted at parents, caregivers, and the general population
- Print/PSA placement costs

This budget will cover an initiative's startup costs, but the initiative's ultimate success will be
dependent on partners taking a leadership role in distribution, including electronic media
(television, radio, Internet, etc.), print media (brochures, newsletters, billboards, etc.), and other
effective forms of significant outreach.

C. Unifying and coordinating our data

Improving school readiness will require improvements in the state's use of data about children, providers, and programs. Better data will allow Georgia to target its limited resources to strategies most likely to improve school readiness and to support educators and parents in their efforts to use resources most efficiently. Linking data among state agencies will allow us to answer some key questions that right now the state simply cannot answer. While federal law obligates the Council to prepare a recommendation for a "unified" early childhood data system, it is important to note that "unified" does not have to mean "unitary." States are focusing on fulfilling this obligation by linking existing systems rather than attempting to create new systems that would require major upheaval in numerous state agencies.

Linking data across agencies can have many positive outcomes:

- For parents, connecting data can make it easier for them to access services. For example, linked data could be used to create a "Children's Passport" (see following paragraph for more information) that parents could use in working with state agencies and funded programs.
- For educators and providers, linked data could help them understand the needs of the children they serve. That allows them to serve the children more effectively – and potentially connect children to other available resources.
- For state policymakers, linked data can help them manage resources more efficiently and better understand the impact of their actions.
- For researchers, early learning data connected to a longitudinal data system will allow for greater exploration of the effects of early childhood experiences on later outcomes.

Accordingly, the state's use of data should focus on identifying what it wants to use data to accomplish and then on building data supports that help the system meet its operating goals. For example, one major challenge in early childhood is identifying which children are being served by which programs. The First Lady's Children's Cabinet has been exploring the idea of a voluntary "Children's Passport" that would provide basic information about children across agencies and domains – health information (such as immunizations), information about enrollment in public supports and social services (such as Medicaid or WIC), and enrollment in early education and care. The use of a passport would make it easier for parents to access programs and help programs better understand the needs of children and the opportunities to serve them. A Children's Passport would link relevant data about the child from multiple agencies that will follow the child across multiple services.

A unified early learning data system should have horizontal and vertical dimensions. First, the state can connect data horizontally across agencies for children in the same age cohort to give a much richer understanding of what is actually happening with children prior to school entry (particularly in the critical infant-toddler years). That information should then be connected vertically to K-12 longitudinal data that flows into higher education and workforce data – so that information from early childhood will follow the child. The vertical connection will depend on the use of a unique student identifier, which children are currently assigned in Georgia's Pre-K Program. Georgia has long been a leader in developing its longitudinal data system, and strengthening the connection of early learning data to the K-12 system will significantly benefit parents, educators, researchers, and policymakers.

In addition to data that helps mobilize resources on behalf of children, the state's early learning workforce has a different set of data needs. Improved workforce data could help identify

system needs but should also help individual providers. For example, improved statewide data collection about personnel could benefit programs by allowing for greater certainty in the hiring process and tracking ongoing professional development. Georgia is currently updating its professional development registry, which will meet some of these needs in a user-friendly fashion.

Unifying and coordinating data is a policy area where the Council's convening role can be used effectively. Data linkages require partnerships among multiple agencies to serve multiple audiences; designing a unified system must be a collaborative enterprise. The Council's purpose must not be to take away agency control of existing data but to build linkages that allow agencies and university partners to use data most effectively. Multi-agency data partnerships also require new governance structures, and Georgia has already launched work on a new governance structure as part of its obligations under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund of the ARRA; the Council's work can build on what has already been accomplished. The Alliance of Education Agency Heads has played a leadership role in improving linkages among state education agencies, and the Council can coordinate with and build on that work to include social service agencies.

In addition to governance issues, important privacy issues will need to be addressed in a linked data system. From a technical standpoint states have looked at ways to give different users different levels of access to data systems to ensure that users only can see data that is legal and appropriate for them to see. As the Council identifies its policy goals for a data system and designs a linked system with the technical capabilities to meet Georgia's needs, it should undertake a legal analysis to ensure that the system properly protects the privacy of children with

data in the system; the final system implementation must include the safeguards needed to protect that data.

Ultimately, the measure of a state data system is not what it collects but what it produces. The state's early learning data system should be designed to meet the needs of the people who are (and should be) using it to improve outcomes for young children. Georgia needs a unified early learning data system that provides parents with the information they need to advocate on behalf of their children; educators with the information they need to serve those children; and policymakers with the information they need to manage the state's resources. Indeed, an improved data system is necessary for the Council to develop and complete its own work, as the improved data system will help track the state's progress toward quality improvement. The unified data system's implementation must also address the privacy and security concerns that must be dealt with for any data system.

Georgia anticipates using federal grant funds to support its efforts to coordinate data about children, providers, and programs. In doing so, the Council will ensure that its work is aligned with other statewide data initiatives and commitments, including Georgia's commitments under the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund of the ARRA, its longitudinal data systems grant from the Institute of Education Sciences, and its Race to the Top application. The action steps the Council plans include:

- Identifying key end users, including parents, educators, providers, researchers, and state policymakers.
- Once key end users have been identified, the Council will encourage staff to work with those end users to develop key questions that end users have that could be answered through early learning data linkages. This effort will build on national

and other state efforts to identify the key questions that a unified data system should be able to answer. The process should recognize that different audiences will need different kinds of data to help them make decisions.

- After a preliminary set of key questions have been identified, staff will present that list to the Council for discussion. Staff will include in that presentation a list of the data elements needed to answer those questions, which agencies collect any of those elements in any form, and which elements the state does not currently collect.
- The primary use of federal funds in this area would be to answer the technical question of how data could be linked across agencies. While multi-agency data linkages raise many policy, governance, and technical issues, the Council has the policy expertise to work on resolving those issues. However, technical expertise will be needed to identify how data could be linked across agencies and what elements would need to be added to a linked system. As part of that effort, the state can also look for opportunities to reduce overlapping data burdens on those who help populate the system. Federal grant funds would be used to hire technical experts to analyze the state's existing data infrastructure and begin designing the technical infrastructure needed for the unified system contemplated by federal law.
- With the technical information in hand, the Council can address the policy and governance issues raised by a unified system and design a roadmap for the state to implement a system that is useful to end users, technically sound, practical to

administer at the state level, not unduly burdensome to local providers, and complies with all appropriate privacy laws.

It is clear that with the amount of money provided through the state advisory council grant, Georgia cannot design AND implement a unified early childhood data system. Thus, the focus of the grant proposal is on the design work. While it is unlikely that state funds will be available for implementation any time soon, a variety of federally-funded data initiatives in both education and human services have been available; having a plan for a well-designed system would allow Georgia to identify funding opportunities from federal and private sources and use those funds as part of a larger plan, rather than as stand-alone initiatives. Ideally, the unified data system in its final form will be no more expensive to maintain than Georgia's current data systems and may even be less expensive; however, there will undoubtedly be some transition costs to a redesigned system, and federal funds may help make the transition possible.

Grant funds would be used primarily for Bright from the Start to hire a consultant or staff to assist with the technical work and with managing the process, including coordinating with other data grants in the state. The project can build on governance structures and data sharing agreements in place through Georgia's longitudinal data system project. The Council proposes to spend \$1.6 million on data unification efforts. The work will include three phases, described in the table below.

Activities Funded	
<i>Phase I: Gap Analysis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify which data systems, if any, capture requested elements • Analyze existing data systems for potential linkages • Analyze opportunities to reduce data collection burden on providers <p>Grant funds would be used to hire technical experts (2-3 FTE) and to partially offset costs of agency staff time</p>
<i>Phase II: Designing Technical Architecture</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design technical architecture for linkages, including matching capability across multiple agencies • Document user reporting needs and functionality for all types and levels of users • Provide initial design for portals for multiple end users, including parents, researchers, and providers • Design training and technical assistance plan for agencies and providers contributing to system • Develop cost estimate for implementing integration plan, including training and technical assistance • Provide recommendations for pilot test <p>Grant funds would be used to hire additional technical experts (technical architect, business analyst)</p>
<i>Phase III: Proof of Concept/Pilot Test</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement system design through pilot study • Prepare report with findings from pilot study and recommended changes • Recommend data collection strategies for systems lacking electronic capability • Use findings to identify mechanisms for timely updates once system is implemented • Provide cost estimate for full implementation <p>Grant funds would be used to hire additional experts, including a web developer, database developer, and business intelligence developer.</p>

D. Conclusion

The goal of the Georgia State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care is that Georgia's children enter school ready to succeed. Through its focus on improving quality, empowering parents, and unifying and coordinating data , the Council will work collaboratively toward this goal. By working together, key stakeholders in early childhood education and care can lay a solid foundation for the future of Georgia.

IV. Personnel, Budget, and Work Plan

A. Name/Agency Affiliation of Council Members

Name	Title	Agency
Jen Bennecke	Executive Director	Governor's Office for Children and Families
Dr. Katie W. Brochu	Superintendent	Whitfield County Schools *(Local education agency)
Dawn Coleman	Flight Chief	Moody Air Force Base; Department of Air Force, Family Member Programs *(Child care)
Kathy Cox	State Superintendent of Schools	Georgia Department of Education *(State education agency)
Dr. Arlinda Eaton	Dean, Bagwell College of Education	Kennesaw State University *(Higher education)
Dr. Carla Denise Edwards	Interim Commissioner	Department of Community Health *(Health care)
Kevin Fletcher	Vice President	Georgia Power Community and Economic Development
Laucenia Frasier	Children & Youth Services Family Child Care Program Director	U.S. Army-Fort Stewart *(Child care)
Tony Foskey	Pre-K Director	Children's Friend Learning Centers *(Local provider)
Janice Haker	Head Start Collaboration Director	Bright from the Start *(Head Start State Collaboration)
Dr. Carolyn Ormsby	Retired Principal	Bright from the Start Board Member
Dr. Holly Robinson	Commissioner	Bright from the Start *(Child care)
Dr. Frank Shelp	Commissioner	Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Studies *(Mental health care)
Gaye Smith	Executive Director	Georgia Family Connection Partnership, Inc.
Justine Strickland	Assistant Commissioner	Bright from the Start *(Child care)
B.J. Walker	Commissioner	Department of Human Services *(Programs under sec. 619 or Part C of ADA)
Susie Wilcher	President, Georgia Head Start Association	Washington County Head Start/Georgia Pre-K Program; Georgia Head Start Association; Head Start Migrant/Seasonal Program *(Head Start agencies)
Stephanie Blank	Trustee	The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation
Lauren Wright	Education Policy Advisor	Governor's Office

*Membership on Council mandated by statute

B. Goals, Objective, Activities, and Timelines for Each Year of Grant (Three Years; Projections of Accomplishments)

The following chart explains the timeline (beginning July 2010), activities, and accomplishments for the work described in this application.

Year 1

Quarter 1: July – September 2010

Objective	Area	Activities	Accomplishments
Improving Program Quality	Needs Assessment	Hold public hearings (three CCR&R regions) Begin creating needs assessment document Determine needs assessment methodology	Draft of needs assessment document and plan for methodology
	Staff Qualifications/ Higher Ed. Capacity	(Begins Year 1, Qtr. 3)	
	Program Oversight/ Management	(Begins Year 2, Qtr. 5 of grant)	
	Health Screening	(More direction needed about phasing in activities)	
Empowering Parents	Public Awareness	Contract with PR firm to lead work Convene focus groups Inventory parent outreach of ECE entities in Georgia, e.g., Strengthening Families Research/engage existing parent advisory groups Investigate/coordinate work with Early Education Commission's public awareness campaign	Contract w/PR firm Contacts made re: parent outreach of ECE entities; existing parent advisory groups; and Early Education Commission
Unifying/ Coordinating Data	Data	Phase 1: Gap Analysis Hire 2-3 technical experts Identify which data systems in state capture requested data Analyze data systems for potential links Explore opportunities to reduce data collection burden on providers	Technical experts hired Work begun on identifying and analyzing data systems and elements

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Quarter 2: October – December 2010 (Council Meeting)

Objective	Area	Activities	Accomplishments
Improving Program Quality	Needs Assessment	Hold remaining public hearings (three CCR&R regions). Present needs assessment document and methodology to Council, including outline of draft vision statement Finalize needs assessment document and plan for methodology	Final draft of needs assessment document and plan for methodology Presentation to Council
	Staff Qualifications/ Higher Ed. Capacity	(Begins Year 1, Qtr. 3)	
	Program Oversight/ Management	(Begins Year 2, Qtr. 5 of grant)	
	Health Screening	(More direction needed)	
Empowering Parents	Public Awareness	Develop PR plan/campaign Identify populations with specific needs, e.g., ELL; recognize/allow for cultural competencies/diversity	Completed PR plan Populations of parents/families with specific needs identified
Unifying/ Coordinating Data	Data	Continue implementing Phase 1: Gap Analysis	Technical experts continue working on identifying and analyzing data systems and elements

Quarter 3: January – March 2011 (Council Meeting)

Objective	Area	Activities	Accomplishments
Improving Program Quality	Needs Assessment	Council proposes and solidifies broader vision for Georgia system Begin collecting assessment data	Council approves broader vision
	Staff Qualifications/ Higher Ed. Capacity	Begin strategic planning process Use existing Professional Development Registry to develop gap analysis Survey providers to understand market conditions Begin reviewing/measuring higher ed. pipeline for producing qualified ECE staff	Gap analysis completed Better understanding of market conditions and of higher ed. capacity to prepare ECE professionals
	Program Oversight/ Management	(Begins Year 2, Qtr. 5 of grant)	
	Health Screening	(More direction needed)	

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Empowering Parents	Public Awareness	Expand PR efforts to radio/television	PR efforts broadcast via electronic media
Unifying/Coordinating Data	Data	Continue implementing Phase 1: Gap Analysis	Technical experts continue working on identifying and analyzing data systems and elements

Quarter 4: April – June 2011 (Council Meeting)

Objective	Area	Activities	Accomplishments
Improving Program Quality	Needs Assessment	Release draft of broader vision for public comment Compile and analyze data	Draft report released to public Council begins receiving comments
	Staff Qualifications/ Higher Ed. Capacity	Continue strategic planning process Continue conversations with higher ed to determine ways to increase capacity to prepare early education professionals	Presentation to Council on gap analysis, market conditions, and higher ed. capacity to prepare ECE professionals
	Program Oversight/ Management	(Begins Year 2, Qtr. 5 of grant)	
	Health Screening	(More direction needed)	
Empowering Parents	Public Awareness	Expand geographical scope and duration of PR efforts	Expanded coverage of PR efforts
Unifying/Coordinating Data	Data	Continue implementing Phase 1: Gap Analysis	Technical experts continue working on identifying and analyzing data systems and elements

Year 2

Quarter 1 (5th quarter of grant period): July – September 2011

Objective	Area	Activities	Accomplishments
Improving Program Quality	Needs Assessment	Finalize draft of vision and roadmap Hold public hearing to discuss finalized needs assessment and potential future changes and directions	Final report of vision and roadmap to vision prepared in draft form for Council consideration
	Staff Qualifications/ Higher Ed. Capacity	Continue strategic planning process to resolve issues identified in gap analysis and to increase higher ed. capacity to prepare ECE professionals	Prepare recommendations to Council to resolve personnel needs and to increase higher ed. capacity to prepare ECE professionals
	Program Oversight/ Management	Draft and issue an RFP for a management consultant to oversee work regarding program oversight and management	RFP issued for management consultant
	Health Screening	(More direction needed)	
Empowering Parents	Public Awareness	Continue PR efforts	Expanded coverage of PR efforts
Unifying/ Coordinating Data	Data	Phase 2: Designing Technical Architecture. Hire two additional experts (technical architect and business analyst) Design architecture for links Document user reporting needs Provide initial design for portals for multiple end users Design training and TA plan for agencies contributing to system Develop cost estimate for implementing plan including training and TA Make recommendations for pilot	Additional personnel hired Work on Phase 2 begun

Quarter 2 (6th quarter of grant period): October – December 2011 (Council Meeting)

Objective	Area	Activities	Accomplishments
Improving Program Quality	Needs Assessment	Council adopts final initial needs assessment	Council takes action to approve vision/needs assessment, which is then distributed to the public
	Staff Qualifications/ Higher Ed. Capacity	Finalize strategic plan dealing with staff qualifications and higher ed. capacity	Council hears and discusses strategic plan
	Program Oversight/ Management	Hire management consultant	Consultant hired and begins to review processes for program oversight and management
	Health Screening	(More direction needed)	
Empowering Parents	Public Awareness	Continue PR efforts	Expanded coverage of PR efforts
Unifying/ Coordinating Data	Data	Continue implementing Phase 2: Designing Technical Architecture	Work continues on Phase 2

Quarter 3 (7th quarter of grant period): January – March 2012 (Council Meeting)

Objective	Area	Activities	Accomplishments
Improving Program Quality	Needs Assessment		
	Staff Qualifications/ Higher Ed. Capacity		
	Program Oversight/ Management	Begin Phase 1: Analysis Provide assessment of monitoring programs; begin developing proposal for coordinated monitoring; and facilitate discussions to determine feasibility	Draft of proposal for monitoring programs Discussions among monitoring agencies
	Health Screening	(More direction needed)	
Empowering Parents	Public Awareness	Continue PR efforts	Expanded coverage of PR efforts
Unifying/ Coordinating Data	Data	Continue implementing Phase 2: Designing Technical Architecture	Work continues on Phase 2

Quarter 4 (8th quarter of grant period): April – June 2012 (Council Meeting)

Objective	Area	Activities	Accomplishments
Improving Program Quality	Needs Assessment	Begin developing package of legislative and regulatory proposals based on vision/needs assessment	
	Staff Qualifications/ Higher Ed. Capacity		
	Program Oversight/ Management	Begin Phase 2: Detailed Analysis Evaluate technology implications; prepare detailed cost/benefit analysis; complete final proposal with work plan; and begin negotiations with key stakeholders	Present to Council: technology implications; cost/benefit analysis; final proposal Negotiations begun
	Health Screening	(More direction needed)	
Empowering Parents	Public Awareness	Continue PR efforts	Expanded coverage of PR efforts
Unifying/ Coordinating Data	Data	Continue implementing Phase 2: Designing Technical Architecture	Work continues on Phase 2

Year 3

Quarter 1 (9th quarter of grant period): July – September 2012

Objective	Area	Activities	Accomplishments
Improving Program Quality	Needs Assessment	Hold public hearing on needs assessment to discuss updated needs Continue developing package of legislative and regulatory proposals based on vision/needs assessment	Public hearing held Draft package of legislative and regulatory proposals developed
	Staff Qualifications/ Higher Ed. Capacity		
	Program Oversight/ Management	Begin Phase 3: Mobilization. Develop implementation plan; launch pilot; evaluate pilot results; modify implementation plan based on pilot results	Implementation plan Pilot begun and evaluated Implementation plan modified Consultant prepares report for Council with recommendations re: oversight/moni-

			toring
	Health Screening	(More direction needed)	
Empowering Parents	Public Awareness	Continue PR efforts	Expanded coverage of PR efforts
Unifying/ Coordinating Data	Data	Phase 3: Proof of Concept/Pilot Hire three additional experts (web developer, database developer, and business intelligence developer) Implement system design through pilot study Prepare report on pilot including recommended changes to system Recommend data collection strategies for systems lacking electronic capability Identify mechanisms for timely updates to system Determine cost estimate for full implementation	Additional personnel hired Report prepared for Council

Quarter 2 (10th quarter of grant period): October – December 2012 (Council Meeting)

Objective	Area	Activities	Accomplishments
Improving Program Quality	Needs Assessment	Council acts to recommend package of legislative and regulatory proposals based on vision/needs assessment	Legislative and regulatory proposals recommended to legislature and agencies
	Staff Qualifications/ Higher Ed. Capacity		
	Program Oversight/ Management	Begin Phase 4: Implementation Mobilize resources for full implementation and monitor/evaluate progress of full implementation. Transition to on-going operations	Consultant reports to Council on progress of implementation
	Health Screening	(More direction needed)	
Empowering Parents	Public Awareness	Continue PR efforts	Expanded coverage of PR efforts
Unifying/ Coordinating Data	Data	Continue implementing Phase 3: Proof of Concept/Pilot	Work continues on Phase 3

Quarter 3 (11th quarter of grant period): January – March 2013 (Council Meeting)

Objective	Area	Activities	Accomplishments
Improving Program Quality	Needs Assessment	Legislation reflecting Council recommendations introduced in Georgia legislature	Council sees vision for Georgia early childhood considered by legislature
	Staff Qualifications/ Higher Ed. Capacity		
	Program Oversight/ Management		
	Health Screening	(More direction needed)	
Empowering Parents	Public Awareness	Continue PR efforts	Expanded coverage of PR efforts
Unifying/ Coordinating Data	Data	Continue implementing Phase 3: Proof of Concept/Pilot	Work continues on Phase 3

Quarter 4 (12th quarter of grant period): April – June 2013 (Council Meeting)

Objective	Area	Activities	Accomplishments
Improving Program Quality	Needs Assessment	Follow up on results of legislative session	
	Staff Qualifications/ Higher Ed. Capacity		
	Program Oversight/ Management		
	Health Screening	(More direction needed)	
Empowering Parents	Public Awareness	Continue PR efforts	Expanded coverage of PR efforts
Unifying/ Coordinating Data	Data	Continue implementing Phase 3: Proof of Concept/Pilot	Work continues on Phase 3 Presentation to Council

C. Plans for Needs Assessment, Public Hearings, SAC Meetings

The Council held its first public hearing on Wednesday, March 3, 2010, to give interested parties an opportunity to respond to the *Outline of Application for Federal Funds*, which served as Georgia's statewide strategic report referred to in the RFP. (The *Outline of Application for Federal Funds* is included in the Appendices.) Notice of the public hearing and a copy of the

Outline of Application for Federal Funds were posted on the websites of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning and the Georgia Family Connection Partnership.

The hearing was held at Clayton State University in Morrow, Georgia, just south of Atlanta at 4 p.m. Twelve (12) members of the public, three Council members, and support staff from Bright from the Start and Georgia Family Connection Partnership attended the hearing. Only one attendee, the Executive Director of the Georgia Association on Young Children, made a formal public statement, a copy of which is included in the Appendices.

The chart below provides a general timeline for the needs assessment(s), public hearings, and meetings of the Council for the three years of the grant. (The Council is defining “year” as the state fiscal year, July 1 through June 30.) The initial needs assessment will be developed, conducted, and analyzed during the first year. The needs assessment process will be informed by public hearings held during the first two quarters of the year: one hearing in each of the state’s six child care resource and referral regions (which are aligned with the state’s child care licensing regions).

Additional public hearings to update the initial needs assessment and review the overall progress of the work will be conducted in the second and third years of the grant period. The needs assessment and action plan will be modified if necessary based on the outcomes of these public hearings.

The Council will meet three times per year (generally October, February, and June).

While the Council is committed to the level of public engagement described in this application, the exact scheduling of public hearings and Council meetings may be modified slightly during the course of the project to ensure optimal use of human and financial resources.

Activity	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
	July- Sept. 2010	Oct.- Dec. 2010	Jan.- Mar. 2011	Apr.- June 2011	July- Sept. 2011	Oct.- Dec. 2011	Jan.- Mar. 2012	Apr.- June 2012	July Sept. 2012	Oct.- Dec. 2012	Jan.- Mar. 2013	Apr.- June 2013
Needs Assessment Discussed by Council	X	X	X	X		X				X		
Public Hearings on Needs Assessment	XXX	XXX			X				X			
SAC Meetings		X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X

D. Partner Organizations, Entities, Consultants

The work described in this application, which will be informed and overseen by the Council, will be accomplished primarily by:

- Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
- Georgia Department of Community Health
- A public relations firm
- A management consultant
- A data consultant
- Advisor to the Council

Bright from the Start, designated by Governor Perdue as the lead agency for the Council, will be responsible for coordinating the work of the Council. The responsibilities of the other partners are described in more detail in the chart under “Goals, Objectives, and Activities.”

E. Sustainability Plan

The needs assessment will produce a comprehensive plan for service to young children in Georgia, including numerous elements focused on increasing quality and enrollment; the results of pilots to improve coordinated professional development; and a plan to provide health supports for children identified through screening in early learning programs. The Council itself will commit to an ongoing process of keeping the needs assessment up to date. The same is true of the assessment of higher education's ability to provide the state with the necessary personnel to support a high-quality system. The two projects funded under improving program quality both are designed to lead to sustainable change. The improvements in monitoring and oversight will be built into the system permanently, allowing the funds currently spent on monitoring and oversight to be utilized more effectively. The mental health funding includes a substantial training component, to ensure that the impact of the spending continues beyond the grant period.

Our plan under parental empowerment will lead to the development of materials for parents that will be distributed by agencies and partners throughout Georgia. Because the focus of the Council's work will be on the initial development of high-quality resources, our expectation is that state, local, and private agencies will be responsible for carrying out and sustaining the outreach.

Finally, our activities toward developing a unified data system will be focused on the development of an operable plan, which the state will then need to identify resources to support. Those resources could include both federal grant opportunities and state funds. The Council's grant funds will be used to complete an essential and discrete phase in of the system's development.

F. Staff and Position Data

[To be completed after the Council finalizes a budget]

G. Organizational Profile of Lead Agency

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is the department of state government that will manage the Georgia State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care. Bright from the Start is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. The department administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs. The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education.

Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue designated Dr. Holly A. Robinson, Commissioner of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, to chair and coordinate the activities of the Georgia State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care. Dr. Robinson was appointed commissioner in 2007. Dr. Robinson represents Bright from the Start on the First Lady's Children's Cabinet and on the Governor's Alliance of Education Agency Heads. During her career, Dr. Robinson has worked extensively in curriculum, instruction, and leadership with corporations, schools (P-12), community colleges, technical colleges, and universities across the country.

The Governor's letter designating Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning as the department responsible for spearheading the efforts of the Council and

naming Dr. Robinson as chair and coordinator of the Council is included in the Appendices. In his letter and in the Executive Order establishing the Council (also included in the Appendices), Governor Perdue specifies that the work of the Council will be informed by and closely aligned with the First Lady's Children's Cabinet.

H. Third-Party Agreements

None at this time.

I. Budget and Budget Justification

The projects to be undertaken by the Council are described more fully in Part III above.

The detail provided below gives the quarter-by-quarter spending anticipated by the Council.

Period	Needs Assessment	Higher Education Capacity	Monitoring & Oversight	Mental Health Screening	Empowering Parents	Data
Q1	\$20,000			\$45,000	\$125,000	\$125,000
Q2	\$20,000			\$45,000	\$125,000	\$125,000
Q3	\$20,000	\$15,000		\$45,000	\$125,000	\$125,000
Q4	\$20,000	\$15,000		\$45,000	\$125,000	\$125,000
Q5	\$20,000	\$15,000		\$45,000		\$125,000
Q6	\$25,000	\$15,000		\$45,000		\$125,000
Q7		\$15,000	\$144,140	\$45,000		\$125,000
Q8		\$25,000	\$144,140	\$45,000		\$125,000
Q9			\$144,141	\$55,000		\$150,000
Q10			\$144,141	\$55,000		\$150,000
Q11				\$55,000		\$150,000
Q12				\$49,750		\$150,000
Total	\$125,000	\$100,000	\$576,562	\$574,750	\$500,000	\$1,600,000

[Further line-item detail and narrative will be added to explain and justify the costs, based on the numbers finalized by the Council.]

The table below provides the level of matching funds expected through state spending on several projects identified as important to the Council's work. These projections all assume flat funding of the state's FY 2009 commitment. The state's total required match is \$8,111,394.67.

Matching Funds*	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Teacher Training	\$1,378,000	\$1,378,000	\$1,378,000	\$4,134,000
Child care licensing and monitoring	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000	\$3,600,000
Assessment	\$449,388	\$449,388	\$449,388	\$1,348,164
Maintaining data	\$845,272	\$845,272	\$845,272	\$2,535,816
Total	\$3,872,660	\$3,872,660	\$3,872,660	\$11,617,980

* All figures here include only expenditures by Bright from the Start.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION NEEDED (FOR APPENDICES)

1. CVs of key personnel
2. Letters of commitment from partners/consultants
3. Letter from Governor
4. Executive Order
5. Proof of federally regulated indirect cost rate (if claiming indirect costs)
6. Statewide strategic report (the outline considered at the public hearing)